

Testimony on HB6430
House Judiciary Committee
September 12, 2006

Representative William VanRegenmorter and Members of the House Judiciary Committee

Good Morning:

My name is Dr. Dennis Jacobs, I am the Chair of the Coalition for a Useful Registry. I am also a Clinical Psychologist and the Chief Executive Officer of one of the largest behavioral health organizations in Michigan.

I want to thank you Representative VanRegenmorter and the members of the committee for this opportunity to provide testimony regarding HB6430.

The Coalition for a Useful Registry represents professionals, parents, and people on the Registry, who believe the Registry is unfair, impractical and costs the taxpayers of Michigan tens of thousands of dollars needlessly.

We feel that the Sex Offender Registry should only apply to adults who are violent or predatory offenders. The reality is that the Michigan Sex Offender Registry currently has over 38,000 people on its list. Valuable resources are wasted trying to maintain the Registry and funds are diverted away from treatment that has proven to be very successful especially with juvenile offenders. This bureaucracy continues to grow becoming less efficient and not serving its original purpose to protect the community, adding additional legislation to an already cumbersome and wasteful system is simply the wrong approach. Please consider the following:

- How will this law be enforced?
- How will the enforcement be funded?
- This Bill does NOT pertain to only those who are on probation or parole!

- This bill does NOT pertain to only those who have been “convicted” of a crime where the internet was used as a tool. It includes everyone “convicted” of the offenses listed above.
- This will include almost every individual required to register regardless of the circumstances, and whether or not their offense involved the internet, or a “social networking website”.
- If there is more than one individual in a household using a “social networking website”, how will it be determined whether someone restricted from using the site has done something “illegal”?
- What if the data and communications on a site, by someone who is restricted, are found to be perfectly innocent and non-predatory??
- Many young people (and maybe even adults... I am not sure) use websites like My Space to network with friends they already know... or they use it to try to find old friends, relatives, classmates, college mates, etc.
- If someone (18 or older) wants to go on a “social networking” website which is for those 18 years of age or older they should NOT be restricted from using the site!
- Wouldn't it be more effective to do a public education campaign encouraging parents to monitor the websites their underage children are surfing or using? Anyone underage should NOT be on a website specifically stated to be for those who are age 18 or older!

In place of this legislation we would like to offer the following recommendations for your consideration:

1. Remove the registration requirement for juvenile offenders.
2. Remove the registration requirement for individuals who do not have a conviction on their record.

3. Adopt a tiered approach to identify "high risk" offenders that is founded on empirically-based risk factors.
4. Provide a reasoned process by which offenders can petition for removal from state and federal registries.
5. Establish a central location/agency to assist registrants with compliance.

Once again, the Coalition strong opposes HB6430. We feel that it is unnecessary. There is no research to demonstrate that such a law would have any useful effect in preventing sex offences.

Again, thank you Representative VanRegenmorter and Members of the House Judiciary Committee for addressing this very complex and important issue.

Respectively Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dennis R. Jacobs', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Dennis R. Jacobs, Ph.D.
Chair, Coalition for a Useful Registry